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Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 16 September 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to refer to the declaration entitled "Advance global health: achieve the Millennium Development Goals", which was adopted at the sixty-third annual Conference of the United Nations Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations on 1 September 2010, in Melbourne, Australia (see annex). Australia was privileged to host this important Conference as a contribution to civil society preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held from 20 to 22 September.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 115.

(*Signed*) Gary **Quinlan**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 16 September 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Declaration adopted at the sixty-third annual Conference of the United Nations Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations

Advance global health: achieve the Millennium Development Goals

The present Declaration was agreed by the 1,600 participants representing over 350 non-governmental organizations from more than 70 countries, who met in Melbourne from 30 August to 1 September 2010.

Recognizing that:

- "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".[1]
- The Millennium Development Goals are basic to human rights, to human development and to equity; achieving the Millennium Development Goals is a moral imperative.
- The Millennium Development Goals, all of which affect the health of populations, are significantly off-track for the poorest and least politically powerful people, despite progress in many countries and the increased efforts of the international community.
- Significant health challenges targeted by the Millennium Development Goals remain. They include the following:
  - 1 billion people do not have access to adequate and appropriate food
  - 2.6 billion people around the world lack access to an improved sanitation facility
  - 8 out of 10 people who are without access to safe drinking water live in rural areas
  - Almost 9 million children die before the age of five; uncounted more have preventable disabilities
  - At least 340,000 women die each year of pregnancy-related causes, including the lack of trained health-care professionals during childbirth
  - Millions of people die prematurely of non-communicable diseases, as well as tuberculosis, malaria and complications of AIDS every year
  - An estimated 420 million people in developing countries have a disability; 267 million worldwide have a preventable visual impairment
  - Human-induced environmental degradation causes short- and long-term health threats, including climate change

[1] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1 (General Assembly resolution 217 (a) III).

- Most major physical and mental health problems of people in low-income countries can be prevented or treated by well-informed individuals, families and communities; international and national efforts must do much more to support family and community-based strategies.

- Communities have a right to a voice and significant influence in policy and programmes that affect their health and well-being.

- Informed citizens play a critical role in monitoring and improving the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of health and other services.

- Financial constraints are being experienced by many countries as a result of the global financial crisis and budget priorities. This is not an excuse to reduce efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

- The United Nations Secretary-General has appointed an advocacy group to build political will and mobilize global action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

We, the people gathered here at the sixty-third annual Conference of the United Nations Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations, are in support of the Secretary-General's appeal for action, and we call upon all Governments, agencies, corporations and individuals to deliver on their human rights obligations to over a billion people living in poverty, by committing the finances and political will necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We call upon parties at all levels to:

1. Ensure that national health and nutrition plans prioritize integrated and evidence-based health promotion, illness prevention and treatment services for all people.

2. Actively support, encourage and resource community voices to be heard through active representation in programme planning, implementation and evaluation, always including representation of women and men, children, youth and older persons, indigenous peoples, the disabled, and marginalized groups.

3. Ensure that all agencies, including donors, involved in health promotion and health-care delivery prioritize the formation and strengthening of national health systems to deliver sustainable and equitable health improvements. Provide additional assistance where required to achieve equity in health-related outcomes.

4. Ensure gender equality, empower women and expand programmes to end violence against women.

5. Ensure that Governments respect and implement existing international covenants and agreements that will make major improvements to health, such as the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and global policy recommendations for the retention of health workers.

6. Change international financial and trade systems so that they create equality of opportunity for people in resource-poor countries — fair trade not free trade and trade that maximizes health and well-being before profits.

7. Ensure urgent needs for financing are met, such as the replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization.

8. Significantly expand support for international and developing country non-governmental organizations. Coordinate activities among organizations, donors and Governments to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness in support of services for the most vulnerable.

9. Advocate for the conversion of military spending to greater expenditure on training and retraining health workers and teachers and on infrastructure for the health and education sectors.

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the citizens of the world depend on the political will and moral commitment of Governments and parties at all levels.

In conclusion, it is unacceptable that so many children and adults in low-income countries continue to suffer preventable illness, disability and premature death each year. The world knows how to prevent and treat most of the causes and has shown that well-focused efforts can significantly reduce the level of suffering. The Millennium Development Goals can be, indeed must be, achieved by 2015.

The present Declaration highlights the central role that individuals, families and communities must play in fostering global health. It compels all Governments and health actors to respect the rights of communities while also maximizing the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of their work by leveraging community knowledge and support.

We thank the people and Government of Australia, the State of Victoria and the city of Melbourne for their warm welcome and for hosting the sixty-third annual Conference of the United Nations Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations.